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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes the various visually-oriented and informational projects that were developed to enhance the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the town of Cody (Wyoming). Some of the projects that were developed included: (1) a slide show presentation detailing Cody's growth from 1896 to the 1920s; (2) a pictorial history of the town; (3) a tapestry displaying several buildings important to local history; (4) a centennial calendar using old photographs of the town and of Colonel William F. Cody and his family; (5) weekly photographs and stories published in the local newspaper; (6) assorted pictorial exhibits; (7) display cases and panels filled with appropriate materials at the Park County courthouse; (8) providing photographs and information for school projects; (9) revising the Walking Tour for the town of Cody; (10) efforts in acquiring artifacts, materials, photographs and information for the Centennial display; (11) informational kiosks erected at sites around the town; (12) a video production of Cody's first 100 years; (13) a Web site; and (14) historical markers for the Northfork Highway (road to Yellowstone National Park). (AEF)

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Celebrating Cody

An Opportunity To Present A Visual History

by Carmela A. Conning and Jeannie Cook

Abstract

This paper presents the various projects that we developed to enhance the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the town of Cody. In the process of supplying information for the anniversary events, we were able to preserve our local history and educate the community.

If we do not know where we have been it is difficult to know where we're going. Our society is becoming one of bytes, immediate solutions and instant gratification. We have raised a generation with a short attention span and an unwillingness to devote a great deal of time and effort to master any activity. Naturally, there are exceptions to any general statement of this type, but we are not here to deal with exceptions. Our focus is the audience that is always in a hurry and needs their interest immediately captured. From our eight years of working experience we have learned that the public's attention has to be grabbed visually if we are to be successful. Therefore, we must design materials of high visual impact to accomplish our goals of preservation, education and a further quest for knowledge.

The Park County Historical Society Archives (Cody, Wyoming) was able to take advantage of the 100th anniversary of the town of Cody and the 150th birthday of Colonel William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) to educate and preserve our local history. The celebrations surrounding the anniversary of Cody have provided us with ample opportunities to preserve, educate and promote our history and heritage. Our funding comes from Park County and is shared among three offices - Cody, Powell and Meeteetse. Understandably, we receive a minuscule portion of the county budget. The town of Cody did have a Centennial budget that we were able to tap into to finance some of our projects. Other

projects did require additional fundraising and were accomplished with the assistance of groups and businesses in town. These visual projects can be adapted by any person or group. Our guidelines required brief written descriptions and heavy use of photographs whenever possible.

Selling our projects required convincing business groups that money could be made from history! They could be sponsors, enjoy positive publicity and contribute to the preservation of local culture and lore.

Some of the visual projects we have developed are - The Hooks:

1) Slide show detailing Cody's growth from 1896 to the 1920's. This show was presented to various organizations and to the students attending the three elementary schools. The civic organizations that viewed the slide show were solicited for funds to provide for the duplication of the show. Copies of the show were to be donated to each school and the public library. This effort generated enough funds to produce three copies of the slide show.

2) 100 year pictorial history of the town. We would maximize the use of photographs in book format to trace the main trends in the town's development. We raised \$78,000 from 12 local banks and individuals who agreed to sponsor the book by providing an interest free loan.

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After all expenses are met any profit will be retained by the Historical Society.

3) Tapestry displaying several buildings important to local history. Unfortunately, most of these buildings have been destroyed. Funding for this project was acquired from the Centennial Committee. The proceeds from this project will eventually be given to the Historical Society.

4) Centennial calendar using old photographs of the town and Colonel William F. Cody and his family. Events important to local history were presented and important dates were emphasized. This was a cooperative effort between the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the Centennial Committee and our office.

5) Weekly photographs and stories published in the local newspaper, the Cody Enterprise. Photographs were essential to this effort. We needed to grab the reader's interest so the articles would be read. This was a project of mutual benefit that did not require any outlay of money. We supplied information that was already in our files. Every Monday the paper carries the "Centennial" pages. These articles have proved to be extremely popular and increased the Enterprise's sales.

6) Pictorial exhibits dealing with various topics - the history of the Cody library, and the important women in the town's past. The Cody public library supplied display space for these projects. Again, this was a low-cost project of mutual benefit. Color photocopying of photographs is inexpensive and preserves the originals.

7) Display cases and panels filled with appropriate materials at the Park County courthouse. These projects were designed and implemented by a University of Wyoming Public Relations intern, Christy Cook. The artifacts and materials were loaned or given to our office by various individuals.

8) Supplied photographs and information on several topics for school projects. Visual

materials were the main focus of these requests. Photocopying of materials made this a low-cost service.

9) Helped revise the Walking Tour for the town of Cody. We needed to supply photographs and information on buildings. Funds for the publication of the Cody Walking Tour was supplied by the Centennial Committee. The Historical Society will receive the proceeds from the sale of the tours at the conclusion of the Centennial year.

10) Helped acquire artifacts, materials, photographs and information for the Centennial display sponsored by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. Any costs for display purposes were absorbed by the Historical Center.

11) Supplied information used in the kiosks erected at three sites around town. The kiosks were paid for by the Centennial Committee.

12) Tim White's video production of Cody's first 100 years. This is a work in progress. The format of this production will be similar to that used by the PBS in its Civil War series. Our office will supply research, photographs and local contacts. The projected date for the completion of this video is 1997. Mr. White is raising the money required for this endeavor and is graciously giving the Historical Society the proceeds.

13) Supplied information for a web site on the Internet. We chose six photographs and three articles on Cody history.

14) Historical Markers for the Northfork Highway (road to Yellowstone National Park). This was a cooperative venture with the United States Forest Service. In honor of Buffalo Bill's 150th birthday, the highway was renamed the Buffalo Bill Scenic Byway. We also have a cooperative agreement between our office, the United States Bureau of Land Management, local groups and individuals to provide research, narrative, photographs or sketches and some funds to erect additional markers in the area.

The Centennial of the town of Cody gave the Park County Historical Society Archives office a unique opportunity: an opportunity to disseminate knowledge. We used as many visual formats as we reasonably could considering time and money. We feel that we have made an important contribution to preserving our history and making the public aware of the community's past.